

techniques, who confused interrogators with constantly shifting policies, and that ignored the many voices who told them that what they were doing was unlawful and that it was not the American way. And it extends to the President himself, who has acknowledged publicly that in 2003 he approved meetings of his most senior national security officials to consider and sign off on so-called enhanced interrogation techniques. The abuses that have occurred under this administration's watch have constituted one of the darkest episodes in this Nation's recent history. They have fed growing anger at and opposition to U.S. policies, and in the process have undermined our efforts to combat al-Qaida and associated extremist groups. The next administration will have to work long and hard to undo the damage that has been done to our country's reputation and national security and to restore the rule of law.

RESOURCE FAMILY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ACT

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my support for the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act of 2008, which was introduced on September 16, 2008, by my good friend Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN of Arkansas. This is an important piece of legislation, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor.

I have long been a member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption and worked in a bipartisan manner to support adoptive and foster parents and children. In 1997, I strongly advocated for the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act which has made a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable children. Since the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, the number of children adopted out of foster care has more than doubled. In West Virginia alone, more than 3,600 children have been adopted out of the West Virginia foster care system. This is a real victory for these children who deserve the love and comfort of a safe, permanent home.

However, with more than 500,000 children still in foster care, it is clear that more needs to be done. This is why I was so pleased when the Senate passed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act by unanimous consent. This legislation will provide additional support for grandparents and other relatives who provide a safe home for children in foster care. Additionally, this legislation will allow states to continue to assist older foster children, those who are 18, 19, 20, or 21 years old, so that these children aging out of the system do not have to choose between pursuing an education or working to prevent becoming homeless. I believe that this legislation is another step towards the ultimate goal of each child having a safe, permanent home.

Senator LINCOLN's legislation would also help bring us closer to this goal. A

study conducted in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that one in five foster homes leaves the system each year. One-fifth of the foster parent population provides 60 to 80 percent of all foster care. Foster parents sacrifice in tremendous ways to provide a home for vulnerable children. The Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act would support their efforts by awarding grants to States to improve the leadership, support, training, recruitment, and retention of foster care, kinship care, and adoptive parents.

It is my hope that organizations and individuals such as Mr. Dennis Sutton of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, who has worked tirelessly in his effort to secure a home for all of West Virginia's vulnerable children, will have the financial support to find and retain enough foster parents to make this goal a reality. Foster and adoptive parents will greatly benefit from the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act, but the big winners will be the children who are placed loving homes. We need to invest and focus on these families.

AFRICOM

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today marks the full operational launch of the U.S. Africa Command, known as AFRICOM. I have long supported the idea of a unified regional combatant command for Africa that recognizes the continent's growing strategic importance for U.S. security and that is coordinated with other U.S. agencies. As I have discussed many times on the Senate floor, we can not pretend that weak and failing states, protracted violent conflicts, maritime insecurity, narcotics and weapons trafficking, large-scale corruption, and the misappropriation and exploitation of natural resources are not relevant to our long-term interests. At the same time, there are exciting economic and social developments underway across Africa that provide openings for the United States to help save lives, strengthen governance institutions, and build long-term partnerships. It is not a question of whether the United States needs to work proactively and collaboratively with African nations in these areas but a question of how we should do so to maximize our efficacy while minimizing potential backlash.

Toward that end, the standup of AFRICOM presents both opportunities and risks. Indisputably, our Nation's military strength is one of our greatest assets and may be necessary to deal with some of the emerging national and transnational threats, such as narcotics trafficking, piracy, and terrorism. Military training, equipping, and logistical support are essential to develop strong, disciplined national militaries and also strengthen regional peacekeeping, especially with African Union missions currently operating in Somalia and Sudan. Furthermore, in

many postconflict societies, such as Liberia, our military expertise can assist in demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration while also helping to rebuild that country's army.

However, while militaries make important contributions in these areas, they are insufficient to address the underlying causes of violence and instability in Africa. Lasting security requires reconciling political grievances, improving governance, strengthening the rule of law, and promoting economic development: tasks for which our military, or any military for that matter, cannot be the lead. To advance and support those tasks, the United States needs to continue to invest in our diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and development capacities on the continent. We need a unified inter-agency approach to these challenges in which AFRICOM is supporting, not eclipsing, the work of our diplomats, our aid workers, and other key partners.

I am concerned that the opposite is happening. Despite initial ambitions to have 25 percent of AFRICOM's headquarters' positions filled by non-military staff, that number has been severely reduced because of resource and staffing limitations in civilian agencies. Furthermore, a report by the Government Accountability Office published this July stated that concerns persist among civilian agencies and nongovernmental organizations that the military is becoming the lead for U.S. policy in Africa. Even as Pentagon officials claim this is not their intention, it is hard to argue with the numbers. While civilian agencies operating abroad continue to face resource constraints, more and more resources are being invested in military relationships and assistance in Africa.

Given this context, it is not surprising that some are casting AFRICOM's emergence as a signal of further militarization of U.S. Africa policy. Such perceptions of militarization are dangerous and risk undermining our ability to engage local populations. As I have said many times, the military has a critical role to play in helping Africans address their security challenges, but we must be careful that it does not outweigh or overshadow other forms of engagement. This is especially true in cases where local security forces are engaging in repressive tactics or committing serious human rights abuses, such as in Chad or Ethiopia. In these cases, we run a very real risk that U.S. military engagement could be seen by local populations as complicit in those abuses and become a target of resulting grievances. Before we jump at short-term opportunities to exert military influence, we need to consider seriously the long-term risks to U.S. stature and interests.

Mr. President, this is not to say that AFRICOM is not capable of such nuanced strategic planning and inter-agency coordination. I have met with